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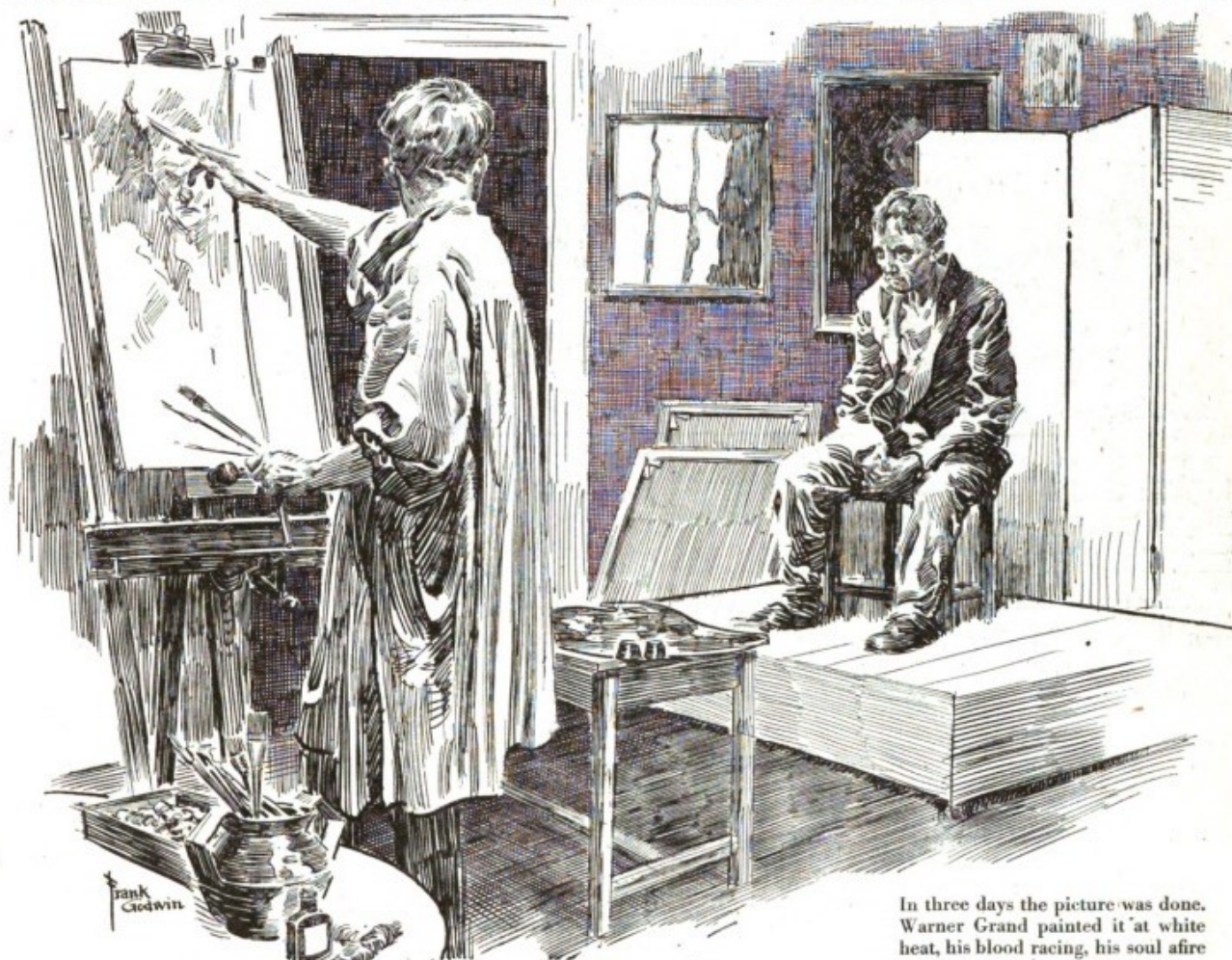
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In three days the picture was done.
Warner Grand painted it at white
heat, his blood racing, his soul afire

The Likeness of a Form

By Ben Ames Williams

Illustrated by Frank Godwin

HIS name, which he came by honestly, as other folks do, was Warner Grand; yet it was impossible, with such a name, that he should have become anything but an artist, and an artist he became. An artificer in color and in oil. He was called the greatest technician of his day. I pretend no expert knowledge of such matters; but one did not need to be an expert, looking upon one of Warner Grand's canvases, to perceive that the man handled his brush as dexterously as a surgeon handles his knife; that he mixed his colors with consummate skill. Method was his fetish; and he made it also his slave.

He had studied in the best schools, and he knew all they could teach him. Yet there was always—save in the single instance which is to be recorded—a deficiency in his pictures. There was always something missing. The phrase is not new, but it was often applied to him; it was often said that he failed to mix his colors with blood.

I have compared him to a surgeon; the comparison may be extended beyond his handling of the brush. He worked as coldly, as precisely as a surgeon works. It was perhaps inevitable that this should be so, for the man had no warm, human contact with the world. His father and mother were long since dead; the estate they left to him had been well managed; his education had come to him through trusteeship, administered by an attorney who neither liked nor disliked the boy. His years in Paris were solitary, his

chastity was notorious, and he had no friends at all. When he returned to New York and began, with that marvelous skill which he had acquired, to produce and market his pictures, he made an instant reputation and would have been lionized if he had been more approachable. Yet he continued to dwell alone.

THERE have been solitary men who nevertheless produced works of art; but that was because they were three-fourths Sentimental Tommy. Such men require no human contact save that which imagination provides. The sight of a shivering alley cat may mist their eyes; a beggar woman peddling pencils upon a street corner makes them weep; their hearts surge at sight of children at play; and about every lovely girl whom they encounter even in the most casual fashion, their fancy builds a tender or a passionate romance. Yet they are as like as not to kick the alley cat, refuse the woman's pencils, box the ears of the children, and decline to give up their seat in a trolley car to the lovely girl.

There are, perhaps, two formulas for producing a work of art. Under one formula, the artist in cold blood builds so cunningly his picture or his statue

or his tale that his audience trembles, or laughs, or weeps as he may for the moment choose. Himself unmoved, he stirs them mightily. It has been said that a true bit of art must be produced grindingly and with many pains; and this is sometimes true. But not always. There are times when the artist himself is overpowered by his own imaginings, when he works at white heat, blindly, scarce knowing what he does. And the result may be immortal.

Warner Grand had made the first formula his own. His field was the sea. When he painted the ocean, those who looked upon the picture cried: "Do you mark the grandeur in the scene?" But they never trembled in silence, and without commenting. When he painted a ship under full sail, they said: "How beautiful!" But their eyes were never misted with the sweetness of that beauty. When he showed forth a ship battling against the fury of storm, they exclaimed: "How terrifying!" but were not afraid.

This was the man's failure; and it was a small thing beside the weight of his successes. His work was popular, sought after; he, by the same token, was prosperous. A new canvas from his brush was an event; an exhibition of his studies attracted scores who sought to master his method.

He passed into middle life, became a little portly, cultivated a soft beard. And then, one day, quite without warning and without realizing what he was doing, he produced a masterpiece.

It was in January; that bitter January when snow

Original from



He saw in the mirror not "The Derelict" but himself

heaped the city streets and a man's breath congealed in little bits of ice upon the fur of his coat. At such seasons the libraries, the museums, and the galleries which offer some refuge from the biting cold are apt to be thronged with people who never enter them at other times, who come in seeking some respite from the bitterness of the open air. Sympathy somewhat relaxes the vigilance of the custodians; they permit an amount of loitering which is not ordinarily tolerated.

Warner Grand had business at one of the art galleries, and stopped in there, toward mid-afternoon of a day that was bitterly cold. On his way to the office of the man he wished to see, he passed along a corridor where one of his own pictures—it showed a dismantled hulk of a ship, abandoned, and wallowing in the trough of an angry sea—was hung upon the wall. Before this canvas, staring at it with pitiful intensity, there stood a man. The artist, approaching, stopped to watch what he would do. After a time, the man still remaining immovable, Warner Grand moved nearer and addressed him.

In three days the picture was done. Curiously enough, the artist was ashamed of it. He hung it upon the wall of his studio and covered it and left it there. Now and then he lifted the covering and scrutinized it, almost furtively. He had painted it at white heat, his blood racing and his soul aflame; never had he worked so swiftly, never disregarded so completely all the formulas which hitherto had bound his art. And so he was ashamed of it now.

There was a dealer named Goldman who sometimes bought Grand's canvases. Goldman came to the studio one day upon a business affair, and saw the covered picture and asked: "What you got up there?" Grand shook his head. "No good," he replied. "An experiment. Nothing more."

Goldman was not a man of any delicacy. He walked across toward where the canvas hung, saying as he did so: "Let's have a look at it." And before Grand could protest he had pulled the cord which drew aside the covering; stepped back a little, the better to see.

The artist, at the other side of the studio, watched him stealthily, as though he expected a burst of laughter, of harsh condemnation. After a moment Goldman shook his head, brushing his hand across his eyes; and Warner Grand saw that the dealer's cheeks were flushed. Then Goldman turned and looked at him and whispered huskily:

"But, my God, man! . . ."

Grand saw that tears were streaming down his cheeks.

THE canvas was a stark and terrible portrayal of a naked and broken soul. It is probable that it violated all the canons of art. It was as mercilessly clear as a geometric diagram; it left nothing to the imagination at all. It did not suggest, it told, brutally and in unmistakable terms.

One looked into the eyes of a man: A shambling, sodden, blue-cheeked, shivering man with hopeless eyes. Ill-clad, unkempt, unshaven. . . . The chin covered with a thin, straggly beard; the cheeks sunken; the mouth twitching and weak. But the eyes

possessed you. It was as though they spoke aloud, in an utterly craven confession of the naked depths into which the man had fallen. There was misery in them, there was also screaming agony of one who has just perceived a direful thing. Agony, and terror, and despair!

If there had been only this figure of a man; if there had been only these terrible, bleary, hopeless, agonized eyes, the picture might still have been great. People would have wondered about it, have discussed it as a mystery; critics would have analyzed and expounded. But Warner Grand had left no mystery. By one of those tricks which lesser men, or even great men in their lesser moments, dare not use he had made all piteously clear.

Behind the man, upon the farther wall of the room in which he stood, there hung a mirror. In this mirror the man's back was reflected. And the drooping shoulders and the sunken head were as expressive as the eyes had been. In this mirror the man was reflected; and you saw that he was looking at a painting on the wall.

The painting at which he stared was Warner Grand's canvas; was a picture of a derelict, wallowing helplessly in the trough of an angry sea. So you knew the man's thoughts as though he had spoken them aloud. He was seeing, in this helpless derelict, himself; and it was the first time he had seen himself thus truthfully. The canvas had stripped him of his last shreds of self-respect, had told him to what hopelessness he was descended.

At such moments of understanding the poorest of men have a right to be alone. But into this tragic privacy Warner Grand had intruded; had seen the man's soul lying naked in his eyes, and had caught it fast upon his canvas here.

THE picture was horrible, and it was overpowering, and it was great.

It became famous. Goldman saw to that. He tried to buy it. Grand would not sell. Goldman raised his price, and raised it again. For answer the artist drew the covering across the picture and shook his head.

But Goldman went away and talked. People began to come to the studio to see the canvas. Sometimes Grand permitted them to look upon it; more often he refused. Those who saw it shuddered with the terror in the painted eyes, and wept with the pictured misery. And more than one of them tried to persuade the artist to sell.

Warner Grand refused. He made pretexts. "It's a trickery," he said, trying to make the word contemptuous. "It's a stunt picture. It's not genuine."

"It is a masterpiece," they replied. But still he shook his head.

He never told the real reason. He would not sell because the canvas was dearer to him than anything in the world. The man was an artist; he knew the thing that he had done. He had painted it in an intoxication of spirit beyond describing; had finished it as the intoxication died—knew well enough that to produce another like it was far beyond his powers. Once, behind locked doors, he tried to make a copy; worked at it painstakingly for weeks. When he was done, the copy was dead. A bit of spoiled canvas, nothing more.

He had always been a solitary man; such folk are given to fancies. He began to see in this picture some precious part of himself; a thought was born in him, and took shape and substance. This thought was that if he let the painting go from him, the best of his own self would go.

Alone in the studio, he always drew the curtain to one side, so that from wherever he might be he could look and see the eyes of the human derelict who

stared at the derelict ship. Between strokes of his brush, he turned aside to look upon the thing. In its presence a weakness beset him, and a helplessness. There were times when he could not draw his eyes away from the eyes of the man whose soul was naked there.

The canvas had acquired a name. It was called "The Derelict." He never permitted even photographic copies to be made; but one reporter managed a furtive snapshot with a hidden camera, and thereafter the picture became familiar in the public prints. But the camera had failed to capture the nakedness in the man's eyes.

The artist's work, of necessity, began to suffer. He found it difficult to concentrate upon any task, his eyes so often wandered to the canvas there upon his wall. The volume of his output steadily decreased; the marvel of his technique became with each new canvas less compelling, less engrossing. His work suffered by comparison with this masterpiece; and since he would not sell "The Derelict," some people became reluctant to buy his lesser canvases.

At the same time the prices offered for this one painting steadily rose. The end was inevitable. Grand began to be afraid of the man in the picture; he began to see in him an Old Man of the Sea, weighing him down, binding his arms, stealing the



One day the artist sold his picture to Goldman. When it was gone, he cried: "Free! I'm free again! I'm free!"

skill from his brush. His earnings were all the while decreasing. His estate had been spent upon his education. Something like poverty began to threaten him.

One day he sold the picture to Goldman. When it was gone, Warner Grand cried: "Free! I'm free again! I'm free!"

But he knew in his soul that he was not free. He was simply alone.

The money which Goldman paid was horrible to him. It seemed like the (Continued on page 24)

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The R. L. Watkins Co., Cleveland, Ohio.

been able to get around to the task of stirring up the public conscience in behalf of the ministers. Winchell Smith, himself, for instance, was occupied during the early part of the season with his comedy, "The Wheel," in which he proved that there were no profits to be made in playing roulette. This was not quite so moral as it sounds, because the play also showed that banking roulette was a splendid business proposition.

It would be interesting to know by just what stages the mind of Mr. Winchell Smith turned from roulette to rectors. The inside of a playwright's head must be a good deal like an attic with its extraordinary mass of ill-assorted furniture, most of it old. Rum-maging about in his storehouse of ideas, Mr. Smith devised for his big act in "The Wheel" a scene in a gambling house. Called upon to furnish another climactic scene for another play a few months later, he hit upon a vestry meeting. Still more curious is the fact that the vestry meeting of "Thank You" is ever so much more exciting than the roulette game in "The Wheel." It has never been supposed that the first nighters of Broadway were particularly worried over the fact that ministers do not get enough money. We even assumed that a great many theatregoers would be able to bear up even if the ministers got none at all. In this we wronged the generous souls of the New York theatregoers. When the vestry refused an advance to the hero of "Thank You," the audience hissed, and when the next act showed him in dire need the audience readily responded with cheers. Indeed, everybody in the theatre grew excited about the wrongs of clergymen.

Morality, Old and New

"THANK YOU" tells the story of a minister in a small town who decides, at the suggestion of his niece, to get along without donations and fees. He feels that his congregation does not respect him because he has been put in a position of constantly having to say "Thank you," much as if he were a servant receiving tips. This problem of ministerial finance is dramatic material authentically drawn from life. It is worth thought even along Broadway. Once stated, the playwrights do not find it necessary to waste much thought on their theme, but work it out according to the conventions of the theatre. Accordingly we find at the end that an obliging millionaire has insisted on endowing the minister, and all his problems are over. This hardly seems practicable, for even if millionaires were all as open-hearted as the one created by the playwrights, we don't believe there are quite enough of them to go round. Harry Davenport, who is just begin-

On the New York Stage

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ning his fiftieth year on the stage, gives a capital performance as the minister.

In this play, of course, the old morality is preached. In most of the dramatic successes of the year the morality is quite strikingly new. Thus, at Somerset Maugham's comedy, "The Circle," audiences rise and cheer in the last act when the young wife announces that she is going to leave her husband and run away with the man she loves. Up to this point the play is developed with ingratiating wit, but with strict attention to formula. Pinero and Jones and other English playwrights used to love to spin yarns about women who wanted to leave their husbands and then decided at the last minute that the price which an outcast must pay in suffering was much too great.

It is at this particular point in "The Circle," that Mr. Maugham astonishes his spectators by departing from the formula. The young wife begins to weaken in her plans to run away and confesses to the man she loves that she fears unhappiness lies ahead of them if they decide to defy society. Here he makes the quick rejoinder that he never promised her happiness or anything like it, but love with all its attendant discomforts and dangers. This is the speech which settles all doubts, and away they go.

In apologizing for the immoral decision of his hero and heroine, Somerset Maugham, the playwright, can plead that it was no fault of his. He gave them ample warning. Indeed he did. Before the eyes of the young people he paraded Lord Porteous and Lady Kitty, who thirty years before had made the same experiment in running away without getting married. Now all the glamour is off their romance. They bicker and fight just as if they were married. Both are filled with regrets for the rash decision of their youth. And still the next generation goes the same road. It cannot profit by experience. At any rate, it cannot profit by any experience except its own.

The Selwyns, who have produced "The Circle," have provided just the proper touch of sentiment for the piece by bringing back Leslie Carter to play Lady Kitty. Mrs. Carter was known to the playgoers of another generation as an emotional actress. She has shed tears over every square foot of all the older stages in America, but now her rôle demands comedy, and, presto, she produces it. Her touch is not the lightest in the world, but her spirit and vitality are admirable. Playing in collaboration with John Drew, one of the finest artists of our theatre, Mrs. Carter almost serves to convince the younger generation that the actresses of our day

are not so good as actresses used to be.

Still, it is rather hard work to convince the younger generation that anything in the past is now of much consequence. For a season or so this disrespect was the subject of the sternest censure on the part of moralizing playwrights. Whenever a modern young woman was introduced as a character in any new play you could be confident that she was in for a severe scolding. Attention would be called to the fact that she smoked cigarettes and drank and was inattentive to her elders. But suddenly the point of view of the drama is beginning to switch. New playwrights have come forward to testify that there is something fine and free in this rebellion of the young generation.

Not Hardness, But Resolution

THE most eloquent of these arguments is contained in Clemence Dane's "A Bill of Divorcement." This English tragedy is not yet among the hits of New York, but, survive or perish, it is the one play of the new season with a legitimate claim to greatness. Of course it is not pleasant. It concerns divorce and insanity, and one of the big moments of the play comes when the young daughter prevails upon her mother to follow her heart and cut away from her stricken husband. But the daughter herself makes a sacrifice coolly and calmly. It seems to us that Miss Dane has been intent on showing the world that what has seemed like hardness in the new generation is instead a mighty resolution. The world can expect its martyrs from logic as well as emotion.

Philosophies, religions, world politics, may rise and fall, but musical comedy stands immutable in a world of ferment. For instance, they still sing drinking songs in musical comedies and draw corks out with a pop from bottles which we all know are not champagne. The elements of a musical show are unchangeable, but there is some variation from year to year in mood and manner. Not much changes in "The Ziegfeld Follies." This has become a standardized show. It is expert to the last degree, but it is no longer surprising. Still less so is "The Greenwich Village Follies," which is built entirely around the sets and costumes, and the show fitted into the theatre later if there is any room for it.

The best of the new musical enterprises of the season is "The Music Box Revue," produced by Irving Berlin and Sam H. Harris. It is as luxuriantly beautiful as any production New York has seen, and yet, with all the excitement about cloth of gold and chorus girls, the producers remembered to stop on their way to the theatre and have a few jokes wrapped up in the package.

The Likeness of a Form

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price of blood; and Grand put the sum away in his safe-deposit vault and would not touch it at all. There was, as it chanced, no need. He found himself able, from that day, to do the old, skillful work which had won him his renown. He plunged into it. "The Derelict" had passed through Goldman's hands into the possession of a private owner, a man wealthy and hungry for such borrowed renown as it gave him. The price became public; it increased the value of Grand's other work. He was, almost at once, in easy circumstances again.

But even in the beginning he was haunted by that blank space upon his studio wall. He tried hanging other canvases in that spot; they seemed, by comparison, utterly pitiable; and he tore them down. In the end he drew the curtain as it had been when "The Derelict" hung there, and permitted himself to imagine that the painting was behind the curtain as it had been before.

The artifice did not serve. By and

by he gave up that studio and took another and plunged into his work with a feverish zeal, as though industry could abolish recollection. But loneliness remained like a weight upon him. His fear of "The Derelict" had long since passed away; the terror which memory of it still evoked in him was not so much terror as awe. Loneliness became longing. Grand had always, in his own fashion, served at the altar of his art like a neophyte in the temple. "The Derelict" came to represent in his thoughts the apotheosis of his artistry. One day he bought a photographic copy of the painting; and this poor reproduction was sufficient to evoke in him an adoration like the adoration of the Magi for the Christ child.

It began to seem to him that in selling the canvas he had committed sacrilege. And in the fifth year after it was sold he surrendered; he resolved to buy it back again.

Goldman was his friend; and Goldman and circumstances made it possible for him to consummate this recovery

of the thing he had sold. The man who had bought it, through those vicissitudes of finance to which such money masters are subject, came to straitened days. Goldman had been commissioned by Warner Grand to attempt the purchase. In the end the rich man named a price.

It was three times what he had paid; and from this price he would not recede an inch. Nevertheless, when the dealer reported to Warner Grand, the artist cried: "Buy it! Buy it! I will pay any price at all."

Goldman shook his head. "That's fair enough," he agreed. "And I want to help you. But I got to look out for myself. Grand. Can you raise the money?"

So Warner Grand suggested an arrangement. He had the original purchase money still intact; he had doubled it by his industry during the intervening years. "I will pay you this now," he told Goldman. "You furnish the rest, buy back the picture. And hang it in your galleries until I can pay the rest."

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